

Based on the 2023 – “DC Pandemic Food System Study” the workgroup focused on a specific policy recommendation highlighted in the 2024-2025 action plan:

*“Audit County land use policies through the lens of encouraging and incentivizing small to mid-sized food production in both rural and urban areas”*

Early in 2025, the workgroup determined and reported to the Food Council the current Dane County agency policies relating to land availability for agricultural use throughout the county.

Specific focus was placed on the development and use of current Dane County land leased for agricultural use. In our review of the policies associated with this policy, it was revealed that current Dane County purchasing and leasing practices involved some accessibility shortcomings for potential small to mid-sized food production farmers in Dane County.

The workgroup also considered the current locations and operations of Dane County Park land used for food production throughout the system. Information was gathered by the workgroup and shared with the Council relating to the operation and management of these current food production locations. (i.e. Andersen Park and Silverwood). It was found that these land management models have been somewhat successful and present a roadmap for future parkland planning and development of similar sites. However, there remained some disconnect between how each of these locations have been operated and accessibility issues continue to be of some concern.

As we approach the upcoming year, the DCFC needs to reiterate our primary mission to promote Dane County land management policy to “encourage and incentivize” small to mid-sized food production in both rural and urban areas of Dane County. We need to move forward with what is considered “low hanging fruit” on this issue. Policy recommendations need to be forwarded through the Dane County Executive’s Office and/or County Board reflecting a change in agriculture land use in our county parks. The change should be focused on the planning, development and operation of “food production” land as a primary agricultural land use in Dane County Parks.

Although this policy consideration is just a small portion of what needs to be accomplished, it is an achievable goal that may start a new awareness of this sustainable food security action throughout Dane County.

Carl T. Chenoweth